

# HARLEM RIVER DRIVE



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Because it has been said  
"Ever' thing comes t' him who waits  
Except a loaned book."*

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A JOINT PUBLICATION BY THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT OF MANHATTAN  
AND THE PARK DEPARTMENT AND THE TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE AUTHORITY

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*Proposed*

# HARLEM RIVER DRIVE

TRIBOROUGH BRIDGE TO  
HARLEM RIVER SPEEDWAY



*December 10, 1937*

THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS

H. WARREN HUBBARD  
COMMISSIONER  
MARSHALL INGRAM  
ASST. COMMISSIONER

MUNICIPAL BUILDING  

---

SAMUEL LEVY, PRESIDENT

C. M. PINCKNEY  
CHIEF ENGINEER  
WILLIAM J. SHEERAN  
SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSIONER

TO THE  
HON. BOARD OF ESTIMATE & APPORTIONMENT,  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING,  
MANHATTAN.

*Gentlemen:*

Transmitted herewith for your consideration is a map showing a change in the street system by laying out a street designated as HARLEM RIVER DRIVE along the Harlem River between East 125th Street and the Harlem River Driveway opposite West 165th Street and laying out public parks in the area bounded by East 125th Street,

First Avenue and the Harlem River, in the area bounded by West 143d Street, Lenox Avenue, West 145th Street and a street designated as Harlem River Drive and in the area bounded by Third Avenue, East 128th Street, Lexington Avenue and a street designated as Harlem River Drive.

This map provides for a much needed vehicular connection between the northerly end of East River Drive as built and in use and the Harlem River Speedway and in addition makes provision for a Marginal Street 100' in width along the Harlem River from about East 126th Street to 142d Street.

The Drive as laid out at grade is 100' in width sufficient for 32' roadways in either direction and has ample space for sidewalks and malls.

Where the abutting property to the west is expected to be used for commercial purposes a Service Street 30' in width has been provided for local traffic.

From West 145th Street to West 151st Street the Drive is carried over the Interboro Yard on a viaduct approximately 80' in width. This improvement is approximately 2½ miles in length.

Based on the 1937 assessed valuation (a) The value of the property required for the Harlem River Drive Esplanade and Service Streets is \$3,248,000 of which \$1,064,000 is in City ownership and \$2,184,000 is privately owned. (b) The value of the land required for Parks is \$2,462,000 of which \$85,500 is City owned and \$2,376,500 is in private ownership, and (c) The value of the land required for the proposed Marginal Street is \$1,459,450 of which

\$410,000 is in City ownership and \$1,049,450 is privately owned.

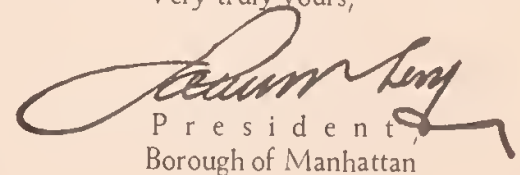
The total cost of the Physical Improvement is estimated at. . . . . \$10,630,000 as follows:

Harlem River Drive, Esplanade & Service Streets . . . . .	\$7,055,000
Parks . . . . .	575,000
Marginal Street . . . . .	<u>3,000,000</u>
	\$10,630,000

The Commissioner of Docks has approved the proposed Marginal Streets and the treatment of the waterfront.

The Parks and the Esplanade treatment along the Harlem River are as requested by the Park Commissioner.

Very truly yours,

  
President,  
Borough of Manhattan



**SOUTH APPROACH • HARLEM RIVER DRIVE**



**PROPOSED TREATMENT**

**NORTH END OF PROPOSED HARLEM RIVER DRIVE AND CONNECTION TO EXISTING HARLEM  
RIVER SPEEDWAY • WHITE LINES INDICATE RIGHT OF WAY THROUGH SUBWAY YARD**



# *The* HARLEM RIVER DRIVE

HARLEM RIVER DRIVE as herein proposed, runs along the westerly bank of the Harlem River from 125th Street to the Harlem River Speedway and consists primarily of moving the coal pockets easterly to a wide, spacious marginal street outshore of the Harlem River Driveway from 125th Street to 140th Street, clearing the riverfront of shacks and obsolete boathouses from 140th to 145th Streets, utilizing the waterfront of the Interborough Rapid Transit Yards from 145th to 151st Street and from Eighth Avenue to the Speedway. On this spacious marginal street new, modern up-to-date coal pockets will be erected, with direct access to a new bulkhead and the deep water of the river and can be reached from the land side at all the main north and south arteries of Manhattan.

Where the waterfront is not occupied by commerce and industry, it will be landscaped and parked from 140th to

145th Street and from 151st Street to Eighth Avenue. Inshore of this marginal street and outshore landscaping, Harlem River Drive is to be provided, 100 feet wide, containing two 32-foot roadways divided by a mall and screened from the commercial activities by a strip of planting along its easterly side and with sidewalk and trees on its westerly side.

Where private property abuts the Drive, a 30-foot service street will be provided, separated by a mall from the main roadways of the Harlem River Drive.

The park recently provided between 123rd and 125th Streets will be extended to the First Avenue Bridge, an additional park will be provided facing on East River Drive, between Lexington and Third Avenues and extending to 128th Street. Another park will be provided facing on East River Drive, from West 143rd Street to West 145th Street and Lenox Avenue.



SCENES ALONG PROPOSED HARLEM RIVER DRIVE • THESE CLEARLY  
SHOW EXISTING CONDITIONS AND UNECONOMICAL USE OF  
WATERFRONT

The playground facilities on the waterfront side of the Harlem Housing Development will be preserved and the space between the bulkhead and the main driveways of Harlem River Drive will be landscaped.

As Harlem River Drive approaches the Harlem River Speedway, grade separation will be provided so that south-bound traffic from the Speedway will go under the Speedway and come south on Harlem River Drive, while north-bound traffic on the Harlem River Drive will enter Harlem River Speedway on the right hand side, with no traffic interference.

The creation of a Harlem River Drive is substantially a revival of Exterior Street, laid out along this river bank in 1858 and River Street in 1867.

The construction of Harlem River Drive involves only one major operation to the Harlem River bridges and it will be necessary to build a new approach to the Third Avenue Bridge, which will of necessity come down to street level in the new park to be established between 128th Street and the

River and between Lexington and Third Avenues. Harlem River Drive, from 145th to 151st Street, must be carried by a viaduct over the Interborough Rapid Transit Yards and kept slightly back from the bulkhead, so that the railroad may use the docking facilities. From Eighth Avenue to the Speedway, the Drive will run at street grade and the elevated structure which now constitutes the Manhattan Elevated storage yards will have to be altered to accommodate the Drive.

Since 1929 Manhattan's waterfront has undergone a great change. On the Hudson River, the improvement is substantially complete and a through traffic artery is now provided from Canal Street to 72nd Street via the West Side Elevated Express Highway; from 72nd Street to Dyckman Street via the West Side Improvement and the Henry Hudson Parkway. The West Side Elevated Highway is being extended south, with a temporary stop at Albany Street, but will eventually run down to and around the Battery to South Street, up South Street to Corlears Hook Park, where

PARTIALLY FINISHED EAST RIVER DRIVE • THROUGH TRAFFIC WITHOUT CONGESTION • RIVER  
FILL WILL CREATE A THIRTY-FIVE ACRE PARK



COMPLETED WEST SIDE HIGHWAY . . .  
THROUGH TRAFFIC WITHOUT CONGESTION



it will hook on to the East River Drive, and thence via East River Drive from Grand Street to 54th Street, under Sutton Place, via tunnel, up York Avenue to 92nd Street, and on the East River Drive built by the Triborough Bridge Authority from 92nd to 125th Street.

This completes the circumferential shorefront highway system of the Borough of Manhattan. These circumferential shorefront highways will be connected crosstown by the midtown Manhattan underpass now projected by way of a tunnel under 37th and 38th Streets from First Avenue to Tenth Avenue; by another crosstown tunnel from the Queensboro Bridge under Manhattan and across to the West Side Highway at 57th Street; and another crosstown tunnel from the Bowery to the Holland Tunnel and the

West Side Highway under Canal Street. With the circumferential highways now under construction and now proposed, of which the Harlem River Drive is the finishing link, high speed transportation will be provided around and across Manhattan Island.

These drives, parkways and elevated highways, together with their marginal streets, esplanades, parks and recreation centers, will reclaim to the City its entire waterfront boundaries which were heretofore mostly under water, at comparatively small cost, little inconvenience, a limited amount of damage to private interests, but with a corresponding benefit to commerce, traffic and recreation, all of which work for the comfort and convenience of the public.



AT WILLARD PARKER HOSPITAL



EXCLUSIVE RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

## VIEWS OF PROPOSED TREATMENT OF EAST RIVER DRIVE SOUTH OF 59th STREET



AT BELLEVUE HOSPITAL



AT CORLEARS HOOK

ROBERT MOSES  
COMMISSIONER



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS  
ARSENAL  
64TH STREET AND FIFTH AVENUE  
CENTRAL PARK  
NEW YORK CITY

ALLYN R. JENNINGS  
GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT  
WILLIAM H. LATHAM  
PARK ENGINEER  
GEORGE E. SPARGO  
ASSISTANT TO THE COMMISSIONER  
WILLIAM R. C. WOOD  
SENIOR PARK DIRECTOR  
JAMES A. SHERRY  
CHIEF CLERK

BOARD OF ESTIMATE & APPORTIONMENT  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
NEW YORK CITY

*Gentlemen:*

The Park Department and Triborough Bridge Authority have cooperated with the Borough President of Manhattan in the preparation of the general plans for the extension of the East River Drive from the Triborough Bridge at 125th Street to the Harlem Speedway, and with the Borough President and the Port of New York Authority on connections between the Speedway and the George Washington Bridge through Highbridge Park.

It should be noted that the problem of extending the East River Drive north of 125th Street is very different from that south

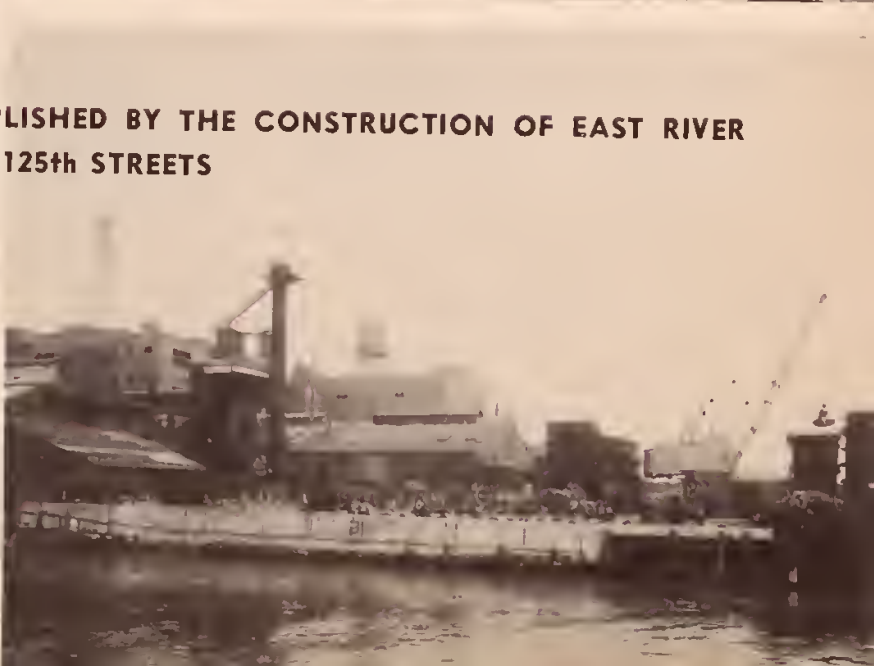
December 10th, 1937.

of 125th Street. Between 92nd Street and 125th Street the plan worked out by the Triborough Bridge Authority and Park Department with the Borough President contemplated a genuine parkway which would wipe out all riparian rights and would provide a continuous esplanade along the waterfront, together with occasional play spaces west of the drive. The only compromises made in this section were at the Washburn Wire Works where a small pier building with an overhead crossing to the factory was permitted, and at the coke plant of the Consolidated Edison Company where a small dock was permitted with an underground conveyor. Otherwise all commercial and industrial uses were wiped out in this area.

North of 125th Street it is quite obvious that commercial and industrial usage must be permitted along a very considerable portion of the waterfront. The city cannot live by express arteries,



THIS PAGE INDICATES THE MAJOR IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF EAST RIVER DRIVE, BETWEEN 92nd AND 125th STREETS



parks and playgrounds alone. The rehabilitation of this stretch of waterfront is further complicated by the numerous low level Harlem River bridges. An elevated highway cannot be constructed either under or over them. Eventually these bridges must be reconstructed at a higher level, but this will be an enormously costly procedure and is a long way off. Similarly it is entirely impractical to place the drive or any part of it underground in a tunnel because this would involve not only very expensive construction below the water level, but also waterproofing and continuous pumping. It is apparent therefore, that the only solution at this time is to proceed along the waterfront by pushing out the bulkhead to the piers of the bridges, provide a marginal street along the waterfront for commercial and industrial use, with the East River Drive west of it, and an additional marginal street or service road west of the drive for the use of vehicles serving the abutting property. Finally, if the Harlem River bridges are rebuilt, an elevated express highway can be provided on part of this right of way. In the meantime, infrequent crossings are provided over the drive, and these will have to be protected by traffic lights.

The Park Department has exercised particular care in the location of additional pieces of land for playground purposes, and especially in the termination of the large new play area to serve Harlem, just north of the present armory which is located between 142nd and 143rd Streets. At this point the frontage on the river has also been reserved for recreation purposes and is to be free from

commercial uses. This additional recreational space to serve the very congested section of Harlem is vitally needed and undoubtedly presents the last opportunity to provide for healthful play on a large scale within easy walking distance of the majority of the people of that community. A promenade is provided east of the drive in front of the new Harlem Housing Development.

Satisfactory plans are being worked out by the Port of New York Authority for a connection with the Speedway at about 178th Street. This involves carrying the new tunnel now being completed by the Port of New York Authority under 178th Street through Highbridge Park to the Speedway, for additional ramps at the George Washington Bridge, and for connections with Highbridge and with the ultimate second tunnel to be built under 179th Street.

On behalf of the Park Department and Triborough Bridge Authority I strongly urge the adoption of this plan for the East River Drive Extension which I believe is the best that can be worked out under all the conditions.

Very truly yours,



Commissioner of Parks  
CHAIRMAN, Triborough Bridge Authority

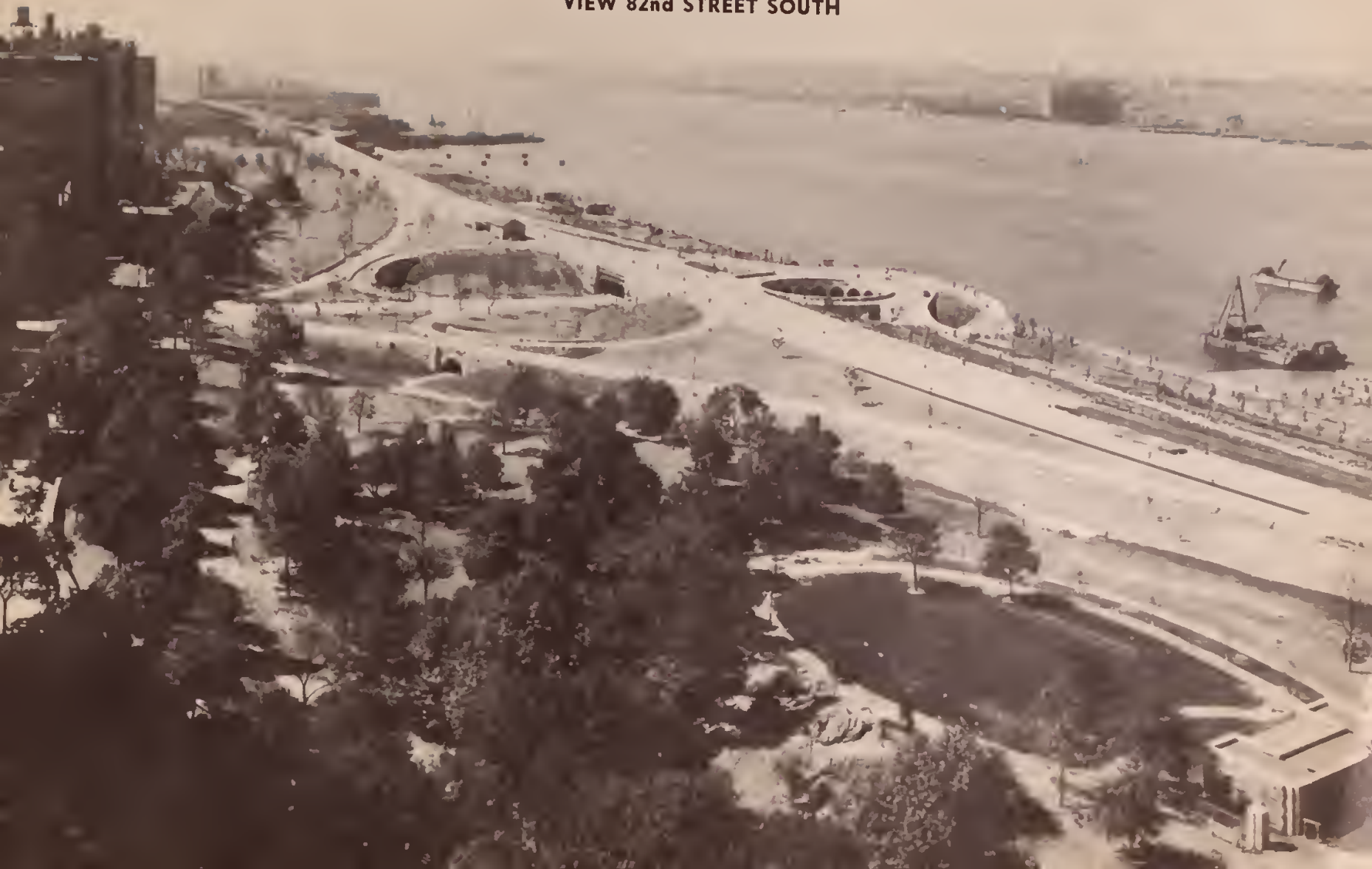


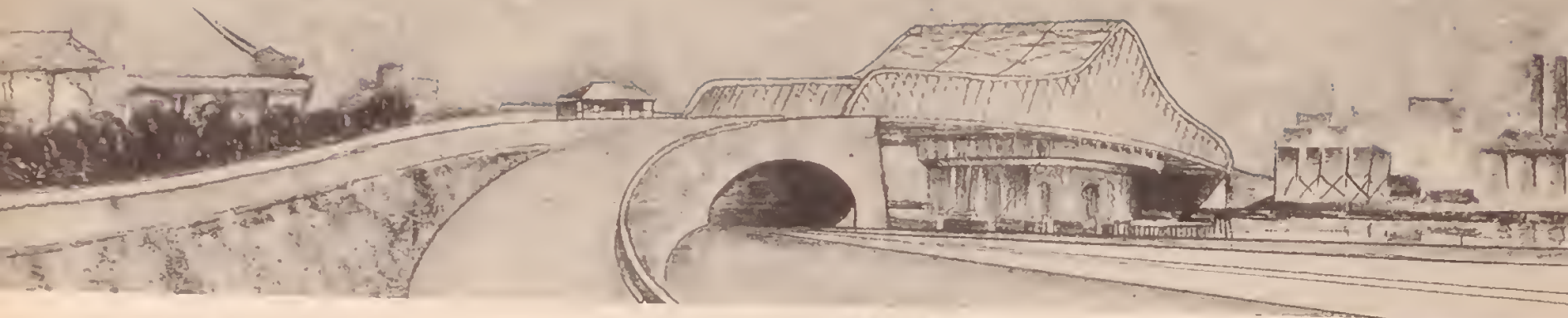
SKETCH OF PROPOSED TREATMENT OF TWO BLOCK PLAYGROUND • EAST OF LENOX AVENUE, BETWEEN 143rd AND 145th STREETS • PHOTOS BELOW SHOW EXISTING CONDITIONS

This is an aerial sketch of a proposed playground area. It shows a large rectangular area with a grid of streets. A central area is designated for a playground, with a small building and a curved structure. The area is surrounded by trees and existing buildings. The sketch is drawn in a simple, illustrative style.



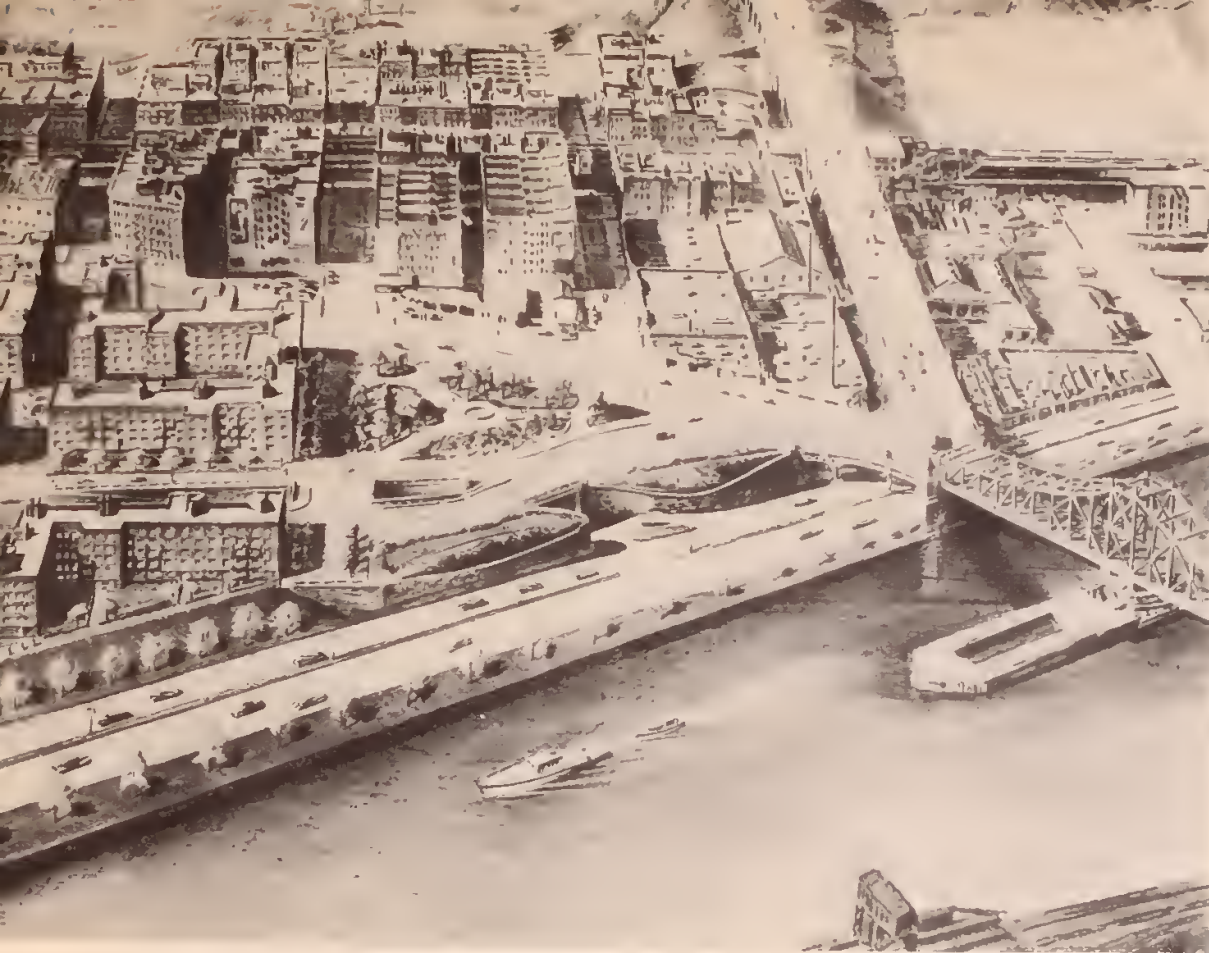
HENRY HUDSON PARKWAY  
VIEW 82nd STREET SOUTH



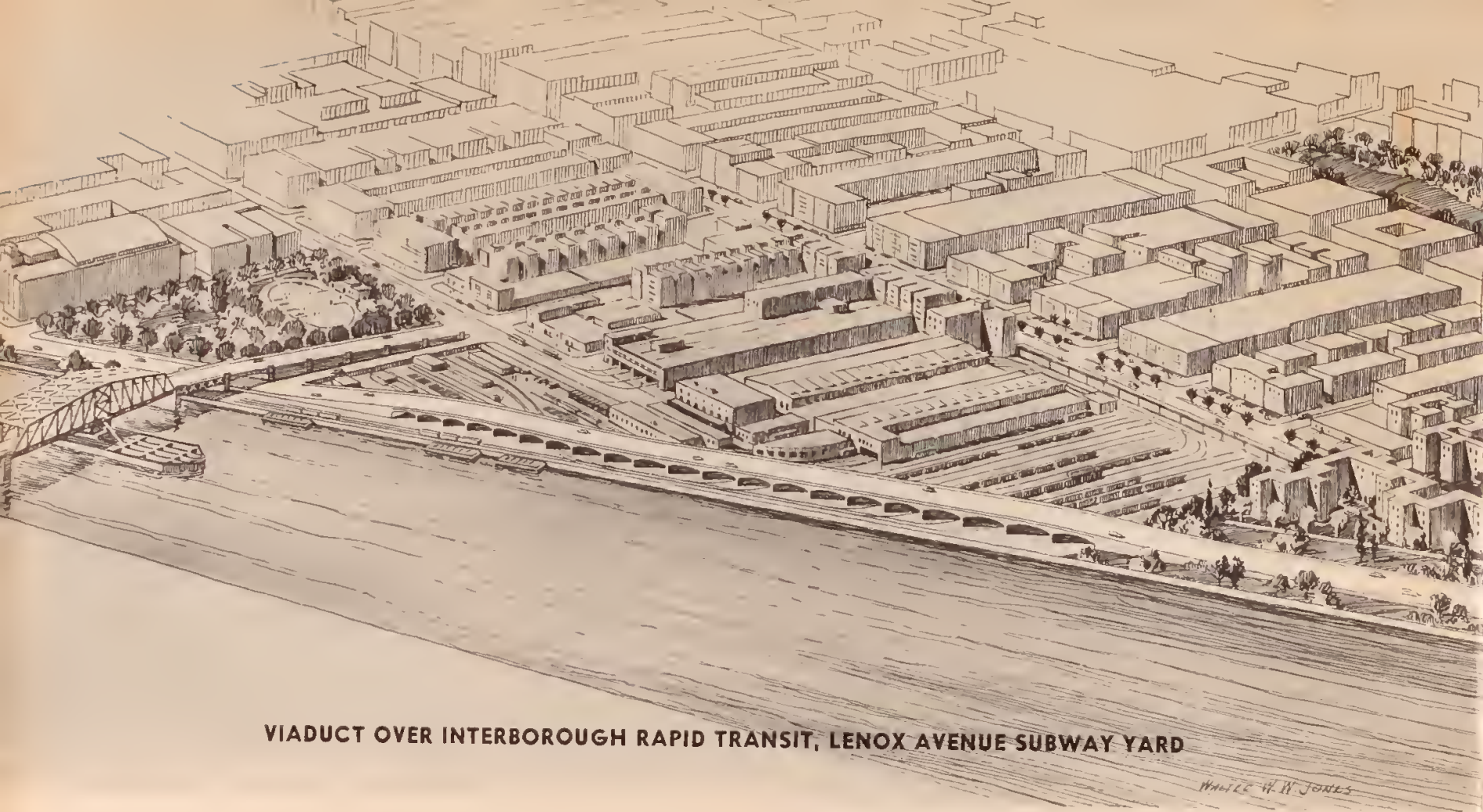


THE PROPOSED HARLEM RIVER DRIVE WILL IMPROVE  
 THE APPROACH TO THE THIRD AVENUE BRIDGE  
 EXISTING CONDITION PHOTO AT RIGHT





**THESE VIEWS INDICATE EXISTING AND PROPOSED TREATMENT IN THE  
VICINITY OF 7th AVENUE, BETWEEN 152nd AND 155th STREETS**



VIADUCT OVER INTERBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT, LENOX AVENUE SUBWAY YARD

THIS BOOKLET EDITED AND COM-  
PILED BY HARRY SWEENEY, JR.

PHOTOS BY SAVASTANO, REILLY AND  
McLAUGHLIN AERIAL SURVEYS, INC.

LITHOGRAPHED BY  
ACME PHOTO OFFSET CORPORATION







**BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWS OF WATERFRONT IMPROVEMENT ACCOMPLISHED BY CONSTRUCTION OF HIGHWAYS,  
DRIVES AND PARKWAYS**

